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THE OCEAN
OF
REDEEMING LOVE

REV. E. CORNWALL.

141. d.

553.







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THE OCEAN
OF
REDEEMING LOVE,
WITH ITS
BLISSFUL ADAPTATIONS;
SPECIALLY ADDRESSED TO
BELIEVERS AND ANXIOUS INQUIRERS.

BY
REV. E. CORNWALL,
LONDON;
Author of "The Unveiling of the Everlasting Gospel,"
"The Footsteps to Glory," &c. &c.

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P R E F A C E .

THE following Treatise forms the two concluding chapters of a little work, just published by the Author, entitled "Footsteps to Glory, —or the Exalted Privilege and Responsibility of every Man under the Gospel"—and was specially written to remove—under the Divine blessing,—the too frequent ~~mis~~conceptions of Christians and anxious inquirers on this grand foundation doctrine. Being frequently called, in the course of his ministry, to converse with such individuals ; and finding from varied experience the importance of frequently *concentrating* the minds of those much awakened to

their eternal prospects, on the character and mind of God *in relation to themselves* — especially his SOVEREIGN LOVE through Jesus Christ ;—it appeared desirable to publish this portion of the work by itself, for their earnest consideration.

May the Spirit of Him who came to this wretched world, expressly “to heal the broken hearted, and preach deliverance to the captives,” bless abundantly this feeble effort to diffuse abroad the knowledge of that LOVE “WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.”

E. C.

26, DOWNHAM ROAD,
ISLINGTON, 1st May, 1852.

CONTENTS.

PREFACE.....	iii—iv
--------------	--------

Chapter I.

RESPONSIBILITY IN RELATION TO THE LOVE OF GOD.

The Awakened Sinner in Darkness—Representative Classes—God's Love to Man, Self-Originated—Man's Vital Ignorance of God—Dark Conceptions of God—False View of the Redeemer—The Father of Mercies—God is Love—the Grand Design of the Atonement—the True Place of Prayer—the King and the Prisoner—Unbelieving Prayers—Conflicting Aspects of God—Love and Anger Exist together	Page 7—27
---	-----------

Chapter II.

GOD'S BOUNDLESS LOVE IN RELATION TO MAN.—(*Continued.*)

The Parental Aspect of God—Our Saviour's Vindication—Kingly Aspect of God—Expressions of Divine Government—the King and his Offending Son—Consistency of the Saviour's Tears—"Fury is not in me"—the Sublime Scene—Paternal Love and Judicial Wrath—Essential Nature of God's Love—Earthly Affection not God's Love—God's Love, truly Sovereign—the Exposition at Calvary—Christ's Love to his Church—Manifestations of Parental Love—the Prodigal's Return—False Representations of God—Vital Deficiency of Preaching—What can Destroy Enmity?—Perfect Adaptation of the Gospel—Enmity alone Slain by Love—Power of Divine Love—Presumptuous Reasonings—Contracted Spirit of Man—Unscriptural Limitation of God's Love—Mournful Effects—the Preaching of Jesus—Records of Grace—Illustrious Conversion of Saul—the Victory of Divine Love—the Glorious Argument.	
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Page 28—72

CHAPTER I.

RESPONSIBILITY IN RELATION TO THE LOVE OF GOD.

WHEN the sinner is newly awakened from his earthly dreams, to discover the terrors of his awful position, he is exceedingly apt, in that first alarm, to overlook every gracious revelation of God in the Gospel,—applicable to his own case. His consciousness of responsibility to God being suddenly awakened from its long sleep—its voice *alone* is heard by the soul. In his midnight darkness—he feels that he is required, if possible, to excite the divine compassion on his behalf,—to dispose God to pity him;—or, that he must, in some degree, propitiate the claims of his awful justice, by penitential sorrow—must render his frowning holiness favourable,—by some meritorious efforts, feelings, or change of character! He thus vainly imagines, that by some means

or deservings, he has to effect a change on the essential disposition of God to himself, ere he can be saved; not knowing, that his salvation depends,—not on his producing any change in the heart or mind of God—but on his becoming *acquainted* with that actual disposition of God, which was manifested to the world, in the gift and death of his beloved Son;—*acquainted* with the very thoughts and feelings of the Divine mind, to him and to all,—as these are pictured out by the Redeemer, in his beauteous description of the father of the prodigal son.

Now, before inquiring *positively* into the revealed principles of the sinner's responsibility under the reign of *grace*,—it will greatly facilitate this design, if, in the first place *negatively*, some of those things be clearly pointed out, which souls awakened to their spiritual danger often anxiously imagine that they are required to accomplish, in order to secure their Salvation; but which, God has peremptorily forbidden;—which, he has not required at their hands. A full and distinct exposition of some of these delusions, will clear the way to a scriptural demonstration, on the one hand, of the glorious Gospel; and, on the other,—of the

work of the Holy Spirit of God in conversion, including the reasonable grounds of man's responsibility for the possession of everlasting life.

How few awakened souls are there, for example, who do not, for a longer or shorter period, fall into one or other of the following vital errors:—first, that before sinners can be pardoned or saved, they are required to strive to enkindle compassionate love in the heart of God to themselves—by ardent prayers—tears—or other impassioned efforts; that they are required by some means, to originate in the mind of God, a complete willingness for their Salvation:—*as if no such love or willingness existed!*

Second.—That they are required to make, directly or indirectly, some atonement, or judicial satisfaction to God's government, for their sins—over and above the work of Christ—by penitence or prolonged religious efforts, *as if the righteousness of Christ, were not sufficient.*

Third.—That they must previously acquire some incipient godliness—some meritorious—recommendatory qualification, by diligent persevering efforts—or through the help of the

Holy Ghost—ere God will condescend to receive and pardon them—as if *men required to be in some degree guilty, before God would receive them.* Let us successively consider these dangerous rocks,—on which so many immortal souls have been destroyed.

In reading the New Testament,—let it be primarily observed— it is of inestimable importance to understand the various classes and characters recorded there, as being truly representatives of the same or similar classes or characters in all ages ; and, as being introduced into the sacred record, expressly to manifest the mind of God, respectively, to each of them. This is especially true of the New Testament cases of conversion. They are assuredly set forth, on the one hand, as representative descriptions of the mind or heart of God, in relation to such persons in every age ; —and, on the other—of the simple,—the absolutely free—the unchangeable means of salvation. Thus, in any age or country to the end of time,—all that is necessary, on the part of any individual of the human family, to his discovering what are God's thoughts or aspect *to himself*—is to find out in Scripture a character *similar to his own*,—such, for ex-

ample, as "*Zaccheus*," the "young ruler,"—or "*Saul of Tarsus*;"—and then perceive *how Jesus Christ dealt with such* ! In this way, he may discover infallibly—how *he is now* regarded by God ; and what reception he may surely expect, when he applies, like them, for eternal life.

Now, on this principle—from the beauteous narratives of the New Testament conversions, especially those of the dying "malefactor,"—"the woman of Samaria,"—the "Philippian Jailor," and many Jerusalem sinners—we are joyfully instructed, that God is waiting to pardon through the blood of Christ—every truly returning sinner,—the moment that he submissively accepts the Redeemer as Lord and Master—as his only true source of happiness,—in other words, the moment that the Gospel is understood by him—welcomed—trusted—obeyed.

Thus, all things being ready on the part of God, for the immediate reconciliation to Himself, of any or every man,—we are divinely warranted to maintain—**FIRST—THAT SINNERS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO SEEK TO ENKINDLE COMPASSIONATE LOVE IN THE HEART OF GOD TO THEMSELVES, (even were that otherwise**

12 GOD'S LOVE TO MAN—SELF-ORIGINATED.

possible.) FOR THAT INFINITE LOVE TO MAN EVER BURNS THERE—HAVING EXISTED BEFORE ALL WORLDS—AND HAVING CAUSED HIM FREELY TO BESTOW—(ERE HE SAW THE SLIGHTEST GOOD IN ANY CREATURE), THE GIFT OF HIS BELOVED SON, TO BE THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

SECOND.—THAT SINNERS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO SEEK TO ORIGINATE IN THE MIND OF GOD A WILLINGNESS FOR THEIR SALVATION; FOR THAT WILLINGNESS TO BLESS THEM IN THE APPOINTED WAY, ALREADY EXISTS;—CANNOT BE INCREASED;—AND HAS ABUNDANTLY PROVED ITS EXISTENCE, BY MAKING A COMPLETE PROVISION FOR THE SALVATION OF EVERY MAN—BY OPENING UP A NEW AND LIVING WAY—FREE TO ALL—FOR ITS IMMEDIATE ENJOYMENT.

Simple as are these positions—supported, too, by the entire word of God,—yet how many, who appear desirous of Salvation,—act, as if they were not true,—as if the very contrary were the case. For, though such persons, may not at once deny these glorious foundation truths in direct terms; yet, when their anxious prayers and spiritual efforts come to be strictly analyzed—they appear

manifestly based upon an opposite principle. They will not even hesitate to admit their inward conviction,—that they are shut up to the necessity of seeking to awaken compassionate feelings in the mind of God to themselves ;—or, by some means, to *dispose him* to be merciful to them.

This vital error is the natural consequence of their souls being awakened, in some degree, to the knowledge of their awful exposure to the curse of the violated law of God,—while yet essentially ignorant of the provision He has already—undesired—unsolicited—made for their deliverance from it. Hence,—judging of God's present aspect to them, by the false index of their alarmed feelings—they are ready to conclude, that, if they saw him personally, He would have to them—in some degree, the dread appearance of a stern—almost inexorable Judge—exclaiming, “Pay me that thou owest”! Thus, being ignorant of God—they are necessarily ignorant of what can please Him ; or, of the true nature of their responsibility under a reign of grace.

They do not understand that there is *only one way* in which God can, consistently with His character, receive sinners,—even, submis-

sive *confidence* in His love and grace,—inspired by the knowledge of the blood of Jesus being freely shed for them ;—and by the gracious promise, that whosoever cometh to Jesus—he “ *will in no wise cast out.*” They do not see, that, however earnestly—laboriously—and impassionately—they seek Salvation *in any other way,—than the one laid down through CALVARY,*—they cannot possibly obtain from Heaven one ray of peace. *For God “cannot deny Himself.”*

Is it any wonder, therefore, that their self-righteous,—Christ-dishonouring endeavours to obtain pardon,—should be as unsuccessful, as those of the Jews of old, who “sought it not by faith, [in the blood of the atonement]—but as it were by the works of the law” ? Or, that the *lack of success* in their blindfold prayers and efforts—should increase their original unbelief in the love of God—if not produce in them a deeper conviction, that He is “hard and austere”—almost altogether unwilling to effect their deliverance ?

But who can be surprised, where there exists such dark conceptions of God,—that when men perceive themselves exposed to everlasting destruction, on account of their

sins—they should strive, like the heathen, to propitiate or render favourable to them, the god of their own disordered imagination;—a god infinitely removed in heart and character, from the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ?

How can it be otherwise, so long as they know not the true God revealed in the gospel of his Son,—and inwardly regard Him as being armed with an avenging omnipotence—which, for ought they certainly know to the contrary, may be ready to crush them for ever! There is something inconceivably dreadful in the very thought of being shut up to the absolute will of an irresponsible being, (even were he a man like ourselves)—whose wrath we have provoked! What then are the feelings of those who powerfully realize themselves shut up to the God of their existence, whose awful condemnation and righteous vengeance they have incurred;—till they are fully convinced, by strongest evidence—of His favourable disposition towards them? Who can endure it? To realize it—is appalling—overwhelming! It is like the bitterness of death—the very pains of Hell!

Thus, the sinner alarmed by the discovery

of his guilt and danger, but practically ignorant of the Gospel in relation to himself,— beholds God, by the lightning of his accusing conscience,—as standing on Mount Sinai, armed with the sword of Law and Justice. Feeling that an interval is afforded him ere that sword descends,—ere he be beyond the reach of hope; and having no other distinct conception of averting the impending wrath, but by *striving to merit*, or in some way to propitiate the Divine favour,—he immediately labours to excite feelings of clemency in the heart of God—as he would do in the case of some awful earthly sovereign—whose wrath he had kindled, and into whose despotic hands he had fallen. Thus, he seeks to produce in the mind of God a willingness to pardon him by means of penitent feelings—ardent supplications—diligent efforts—*as if no such willingness really existed.*

And, what is still worse,—the Lord Jesus Christ—is often, in such circumstances, regarded in a light which adds to the delusion. He is viewed—not as he is set forth in Scripture—the very gift and demonstration of God’s love to the world;—but, as if he were personally *far more inclined to befriend them,*

than is the Father in Heaven! They behold him, therefore, as one, who, they hope, will become in some degree a *shield* to interpose between them and their dreaded Judge!—They are ignorant of the glorious truth which Christ spake—when he exclaimed, “I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE.”—one in nature—dignity and character—and one in mind and heart to the human race. They know not, that Jesus in all his life below,—was ever manifesting the express image of God’s person—ever revealing His heart in relation to man;—that the feelings of the Redeemer to the world—while bleeding on the Cross for their sins, and thereby longing to enrich them for ever with the treasures of his grace—were, even then, the exact representation of the eternal and unchangeable mind of HIM, from whom they flee as from an avenging enemy!

Now, it is manifest from Scripture, that no bewildered heathen ever arrayed his imaginary deity in attributes more essentially opposed to the true God,—than what are now referred to. And yet, what can be more common throughout our land—distinguished though it is for spiritual privileges,—than such views—such feelings of God—however

much they may be covered over by imposing Scripture terms? And who can wonder? For to what other conclusions regarding God does much of the preached and published theology of our day tend? and by how many are such dark views of God even directly and openly maintained?

Doubtless, there are isolated passages of Scripture, which may easily be perverted from their real meaning and connection, to favour the advocacy of such soul destroying error. Nevertheless, the oracles of truth, as by one consent, describe the God of Heaven, as the "FATHER OF MERCIES," as being "GOOD AND READY TO FORGIVE"—through the blood of Christ;—ready to respond at once to every sinner—even the chief, who, like the publican in the parable, draws near to God—not to awaken feelings of mercy in his bosom—but to plead, in the confidence of being heard, *the exercise of a mercy already existing there*; the personal application of the peace-speaking blood,—*already poured out* on behalf of the world.

They set Him forth as LOVE itself;—as so loving the world—all guilty—all worthless—all sunk in almost endless crimes—as it was

and is ; that in order to save it—in perfect consistency with his high and holy attributes of justice, equity, and truth—he gave up his only-begotten Son to die for it. They reveal—that He delivered him to make a grand provision for its deliverance from sin and all its consequences—and that He might maintain the infinite rectitude of his government in the sight of the universe, while sending forth His richest blessings and honours to the guilty,—that He might be just while freely justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus. Thus do they describe Him as full of compassion to every sinner,—infinitely willing to receive and embrace the vilest through Jesus Christ ; even as did the father of the prodigal—his long-lost son.

To strive, therefore, to kindle gracious feelings in the heart of God—a heart in which intense compassionate love to us perpetually exists, and which the many waters of our sins could not quench ;—to strive to dispose him to be willing to receive us, when the highest manifestations consistent with His character have been made, to demonstrate His perfect willingness to meet and welcome every sinner, who draws near to his throne of grace

by the “new and living way”—to be saved *from sin* and all its consequences,—is exceedingly dishonouring to God. For, at once, it practically denies the revelation of His character in Christ—casts discredit on the plainest declarations of His word—and virtually makes Him “a liar.” And, finally, to imagine that the death and intercession of Christ—though indispensably necessary to illustrate and glorify every attribute of God’s character, while saving the world—were yet in any case required to *cause* God to feel love, or be inwardly desirous to save any man—is nothing else than the delusion of unbelief or deadly ignorance of God;—opposed, as light is opposed to darkness, to the clearest statements of the word of God.

Oh! did awakened souls only attend to “the word” which “is nigh them,” they would soon make the wondrous discovery that the gracious feelings to them, which they are anxious to enkindle—ignorantly striving to produce in God—have from eternity existed as an overflowing ocean,—ready, up to that moment—so soon as they believed in its source—and with submissive confidence touched the sceptre of God—to pour its happy floods into

their souls. They would then quickly perceive that the first grand design of Christ's sufferings and death, was to open a new—honourable—and ever free channel from that ocean to this world,—that it might cover it as the waters cover the sea, with all the fulness of its blessings. For, how could God have sent His Son to be a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world—if he had not first loved the world? And how could He have anointed His servants with the Holy Spirit, and sent them to proclaim the good tidings to every creature—to beseech them in Christ's stead—as his representatives,—all fired with his affection—to be reconciled to Him—yea, to compel them, by the display of his love on the Cross, to partake of the Gospel feast;—if He had not the most gracious aspect to each and all of them—if He were not infinitely willing to pardon and save?

But, if the fearful reverse were the case—if these gracious feelings and desires had no existence in God's heart; how vain, how worse than vain, to seek to produce them; or expect, that the doings—feelings—and agonising entreaties of creatures—whose every imagination is evil, and that continually—

could possibly cause their existence in the mind of a holy and righteous God—who is of one mind, which none can turn? No, their blood would be mingled with their sacrifice.

Now, to illustrate the true place of *prayer*—the wickedness of unbelief in the love of God—as well as to show the folly of seeking deliverance from condemnation by self-devised efforts,—let us imagine the benevolent Sovereign of a country seeking some expedient (consistent with the honour of his law and government) to deliver a justly condemned criminal in one of his dungeons.

All unsolicited, and most undeserved on the part of the prisoner, he hastens to execute the purpose of mercy. A decree is made, in which it is ordained—that a free pardon may be obtained by the prisoner, so soon as he shall thankfully acknowledge the king's goodness—express his submission to his government—and petition for it in a certain *legal form*.

This appointed order for obtaining mercy could not have been made for the purpose of effecting any change in the king's heart or mind towards him—but simply, for that of maintaining the honour of the government ;—

that, while freely granting deliverance, the captive might realize, in some degree, that submissive state of mind—and those feelings of gratitude, which would lay a foundation for his future reformation of character.

What would the Sovereign think, after this spontaneous goodness on his part—and a free way had been graciously opened up for the immediate exercise of pardon—if he heard that the prisoner had refused to credit his merciful kindness;—that he regarded the whole plan with deepest suspicion, because he had not been at once discharged?—and that he proudly refused to submit to the simple means of pardon? What would he think if, at last, when the criminal became alarmed, (the day of execution drawing near) he sent a succession of anxious petitions to the throne, not expressing grateful thanks for the king's clemency, and craving, in legal form, that the plan of mercy might be completed—but on the contrary, entreating him,—as if he had *done nothing* on his behalf—as if he had *no desire* to save him—and as if he were *cold-hearted* and obdurate,—to have compassion upon him?

Could the king possibly respond to these

prayers,—especially if they were continued after every means had been employed, and messenger after messenger sent to remove the prisoner's suspicions—to dissuade him from continuing his unbelieving—dishonouring petitions, and to convince him of the king's compassion and perfect willingness to deliver him by the *only means through which that deliverance could be honourably and safely effected*? Could he respond to these prayers,—if he was fully aware that the real causes why his spontaneous plan of mercy had been so wickedly disbelieved, were,—hatred to his person—and *proud unwillingness to submit to his government*? Would it be any reflection on the character of the king, whose veracity and grace had been thus disbelieved, if he allowed every petition to remain *unheeded*; and if he permitted the dread sentence of the law at length to take its awful course?

But, what is this supposed treatment of a king, or any possible earthly case,—to the guilt of lacking confidence in the unbounded love of God, who gave his Son Jesus Christ to the world—first, to declare it in person, and then to seal it with his blood? How can those prevail with God who practically disbelieve

this free love—and this unbounded gift—and yet strive, in the very midst of this unbelief, to obtain a pardon by self-righteous efforts—prayers—tears? How can such unbelieving prayers be responded to—however selfishly earnest they may be? It were impossible. God can receive no petition, in consistency with his revealed character, but at the hand of ONE MEDIATOR—and that one is—Jesus Christ. If, then, there be no true confidence in God—and in the only Advocate with the Father—how vain to trust to *the mediatorship of feelings*, or impassioned importunities! How can God receive these Christ-dishonouring prayers?

Now, some readers may realize considerable difficulty in sympathising with all these statements. They may have been accustomed to conceptions of God, in some respects, diametrically opposed to these happier views; partly derived from a class of scripture passages—which appear to them to speak an entirely opposite language to those now mentioned,—in describing the aspects of God to unredeemed men. Being unable to reconcile these apparently conflicting passages together—their minds have come to dwell chiefly on

the darkest and most alarming class. Hence, their slowness to receive the plainest declarations of the love—the compassion—the gracious aspect of God *to all*.

They cannot, for example, reconcile the revealed love of God to all—the gracious aspect to the entire family of man—with those scriptures—which describe the “anger,” or “wrath of God,” as *actually* existing towards the rebellious. Can love and anger, say they, exist at the *same time*—in the *same mind*?

Now, without staying to examine here the full meaning of the alarming expressions in question—let it be at once replied—*undoubtedly they may*;—as we see from ten thousand instances in the human family. Look, for example, at the most affectionate father, who has just heard of some daring act of disobedience on the part of his son,—and who is summoned to correct, and if possible remove the evil. Does the anger, and the strong manifestation of displeasure on the part of the father, destroy or lessen the deep love of his inmost soul to his son? The thought were absurd. Surely king David was many times angry with his wicked—rebellious son Absolom, and felt deepest abhorrence at his

parricidal,—his murderous wickedness. But at his untimely death, under the darts of Joab—let the father's piercing lamentations witness the intensity *of his love!* Thus, we see how parental love and anger, as well as hatred of *character*, may exist, at the *same time*, in the *same mind*; though, from our limited capacity—we may not, at the moment of anger or indignation, be distinctly conscious of the other. *But it is there.*

CHAPTER II.

GOD'S BOUNDLESS LOVE IN RELATION TO MAN—

Continued.

To comprehend and harmonize the different or apparently conflicting expressions in Scripture of God's aspect to sinners,—it is of the utmost importance to remember that God sustains a *twofold* relation to man. And, though the expression of each may appear sometimes contradictory of the other,—they are yet in perfect harmony.

First—He sustains a PARENTAL relation. He is the FATHER of their spirits—views them, notwithstanding their rebellion, as his offspring—with all the compassion of paternal solicitude. Thus, he exclaims in reference to the kingdom of Israel—"I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." And thus also Paul, in his address to the Athenian gentiles, quotes with approbation, an expression of certain of

their poets — “we are also *his offspring*.” “Forasmuch then,” added he, “as we are the *offspring* of God—we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver.”

Now, it is under *the* PARENTAL ASPECT that His love to the world is continually manifested. Thus, when the Pharisees indignantly wondered at our Lord’s friendly aspect to the publicans and sinners—the very outcasts of society;—and regarded this fact, in the pride of their hearts, as quite enough to countervail all his credentials of Messiahship—he at once vindicated himself, by appealing, first—to the deep interest which the shepherd who had lost his sheep, and the woman who had lost her silver, respectively took in the loss or danger of *that which was their own*; and, next, especially—by picturing out the unutterable solicitude and compassion of a father for his prodigal son. In this lovely narrative, he delightfully showed, how the ungrateful wickedness, and lengthened perversity of the latter,—*never did lessen or destroy the deep-rooted, all-absorbing, parental affection of the former.*

But, where would have been the point and force of this overwhelming appeal, if such a parental compassionate love did not still burn

in the heart of God to His entire—fallen—rebellious offspring *in this world*—or if Jesus himself did not possess all the longings of *a tender heart* to each of them ;—if they were not—in a word—his own property, for whom he was about to pour out his atoning blood ?

Thus, he indirectly exclaimed to his wicked—self-righteous opposers —“you would not blame the shepherd, for anxiously seeking, and at length rejoicing over his lost sheep—nor the woman for the care which she manifested for her lost money—nor for her gladness when she found it ;—you would not condemn the father for his joyful exultation over the prodigal just returned to his right mind and to his father’s house. And why ? Because—all of them rejoiced over the restoration of that which *was their own*. Why, then, do you blame me for seeking any one of these poor souls ? They are mine. You do not feel your relation to them, for sin has destroyed your love—has hardened your hearts—and led you to echo the murderer’s cry, ‘ Am I my brother’s keeper ?’ But, I feel my relation to each of them. *I* have no sin, and my heart

still loves—still yearns over them with a father's love—still longs for their Salvation.

“They are my property. I made each of them—‘all souls are mine.’ I have hitherto maintained them in existence, and I have come to die for each of them. They are dearer to me than the entire material universe. True—they have left me, and wandered away like lost sheep—yet my compassionate love to them, and to every sinner of the human family, remains unquenched. And when any wretched sinner comes to me and is freely pardoned—then there is joy in Heaven in the presence of the angels of God—and there is joy in earth. *But oh! my joy exceeds them all.* For, as the joy of the shepherd—and of the woman—and of the father—exceeded that of the friends and neighbours whom they invited to share in their feelings—so my joy, over any or every returning sinner, exceeds that of all saints and angels in heaven or on earth. It is my voice which is heard by them all—exclaiming—‘rejoice with me—for this my son was dead, but is alive; was lost, but is found.’ ”

But, besides the wondrous *parental* feeling

in the heart of God to every man,—he sustains,—

Secondly,—the high official relation to the human family, of KING or GOVERNOR. Now, every earthly king, or chief governor, who is at the same time the head of a family, sustains these relations distinctly to each member of that family. In his *private* capacity he is their FATHER, and speaks to them *as such* in terms of endearment or especial affectionate interest. In his *public* capacity, on the other hand—he is their KING—and *as such*, makes no difference in his mode of dealing with them from that of any others of his subjects. And, while he speaks to them from the throne in his official capacity—the expression of *mere parental feelings* is necessarily for the time *held in abeyance*. And so with God. At one time he speaks in His Word to all men as a FATHER—longing for their salvation, and lamenting their folly and rebellion. At another time—He speaks as their SOVEREIGN—at once —justifying —rewarding —condemning, or punishing,—according to the principles of law and justice.

THUS, as THE UNIVERSAL GOVERNOR—
THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE, he ac-

quits the righteous or punishes the wicked ; conducting His government on grounds of perfect equity — righteousness — and truth. For, justice and judgment are the basis of his throne. Hence, his holy decisions or declarations, as Judge of all—are often clothed with language so terrible, that they might seem to us to have proceeded from sudden or awfully impetuous feelings. But no. This language is only used in condescension to our apprehensions ; and is employed for a wise and most merciful design. The awful words—“ Wrath ” — “ Indignation ” — “ Fury of the Lord ” —are only employed, (as terms with which we are familiar,) to describe the dreadful certainty of God’s hatred to sin—his determination to punish the persevering offender—and the fearful results, to such persons, of His judicial or kingly threatenings and judgments. They also denote that the retribution which will certainly overtake the wicked, will be found as dreadful, *in fact* as would be accomplished by an earthly absolute sovereign, in these terrible states of fury—wrath—burning indignation.

But, though God sees it necessary thus awfully to address the capacity of fear in

wicked men, that he might awaken them from their sleep of death—and lead them to consider the nature and terrific consequences of unpardoned sin,—yet this mode of speaking does not in the slightest degree disprove the sincerity of his *compassionate love to those* whose just fears he is thus seeking mercifully to awaken—*that they may be saved*. No other means would suffice.

A simple illustration of the perfect consistency of judicial anger or wrath, with ardent parental affection, may be easily taken from an earthly case. Let us conceive of a king or lawgiver—distinguished for the equity of his laws—the strict impartiality of his government—and not less so for his general benevolence and intense parental affection. One of his beloved family is arraigned before him for a public crime. Behold him on his tribunal—during the trial! He is striving to hold in check his parental feelings,—that justice may be done. His son is condemned. He pronounces the sentence in full;—and then retires to weep in agony over his unhappy child.

To hear his language on his judicial throne supporting the MAJESTY OF LAW—and then

afterwards listen to the gushings of his PARENTAL HEART in his secret place,—exclaiming in anguish, “O my son!—would that I had died for thee!”—one would be ready to conclude that he had listened to the voices of two *distinct* persons. But was there in reality any contradiction? The son, in his prison, may indeed feel as if he were enduring the “wrath”—the “fury” of the Governor. But the inward meltings of the Governor’s heart—his many tears in secret—all exclaim, “*Fury is not in me!*” And so with God. Thus, for example, while the “indignation” or “wrath” of His Government was about to overwhelm the city of Jerusalem and its guilty inhabitants in destruction,—behold the Lamb of God—(who fully exhibited the mind of his Father—the Judge of all)—weeping as in an agony of grief over them all! Thus must we distinguish between God speaking and acting in infinite love as the FATHER of our spirits—and the same God,—upholding the MAJESTY of Universal Government—declaring the inflexibility of his law and justice. These different manifestations are perfectly consistent. And in this view, the awful expression, “God is angry with the wicked every day,”—must be

interpreted as denoting the infinite repugnance and opposition of God to their sins ;—the *threatening attitude* of His holy government to the persevering—*determined offender*—as being every day *ready* to destroy him ; while, in the midst of this suspended *judicial wrath*, or anger—and in perfect consistency with it—the voice of the Father's compassionate love bursts forth, exclaiming, “ Why will ye die ? As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.”

But, though God, in revealing his holy character to the world, has condescended to adopt the language of man—and frequently to describe His thoughts by the expressions of the excited feelings of even intellectual imperfections of man—as, for example—where it is said—that, “ He repented that he had made man”—that, “ It grieved him to the heart”—yet, we are not by such illustrative language to confound the unchangeable serene Majesty of the omniscient Creator, with the agitating mental fluctuations of the creature, when some new and exciting events have occurred.

Though he is pleased, in compassion to our weakness, to draw illustrations from human

passions,—to describe, or impress on the minds of men, his hatred of sin—and the awful retributive justice of his holy government,—we must not *literally* interpret the Lord by his creatures. This were to fall into the error charged upon wicked man—“Thou thoughtest I was such an one as thyself.” The Lord has no literal feeling corresponding to the “fury” of man,—though his judgment on sin may picture him out as if it were so. He is revealed as the “GOD OF PEACE.” From eternity—he enjoyed in and of himself an ocean of blessedness,—alike incapable of increase or diminution. He never, for a moment, had his peace beclouded. How could it be? Such darkness or agitation could not rise from himself;—for he is *essentially*—LIGHT and LOVE. He rests in his love. Neither could it come from any part of the universe. For there is nothing above him;—nothing in existence but what he can and does control,—or assign exact limits to its permitted liberty. How then could he be agitated by it?

Thus, when we read such expressions in Scripture as the “wrath,” “anger,” “fury,” “indignation,” of the Lord—we are ever to remember, as already stated, that these words

on no account are to be understood as expressing any intrinsic agitations of His heart; but as chiefly describing the alarming aspects of His holy government to every sinner who has not fled to the Redeemer for eternal life. They will, moreover, be as dreadfully fulfilled to the finally impenitent as if they were the exact description of literal "fury" in the heart of God to them. How fearful, therefore, is the condition of that man, who is thus truly likened to one—every moment exposed to the fury of a justly provoked—absolute monarch! When such wrath overtakes him,—How can he escape?

But, on the other hand, to give these awakened words a literal interpretation, as descriptive of God's inward feelings, would lead to all kinds of absurdity, and exceedingly dishonour the Lord. Let it be repeated—God is necessarily exempt from all agitating human passions, and every single judgment he has ever brought on sinners has been the calm dictate of his righteous government. He "sits on the flood!" He "walks (the expression of perfect calmness) on the wings of the wind—the impetuous hurricane!" Nothing can agitate his mind;—for to Him nothing

is new—sudden—or unexpected!—nothing stronger than himself;—nothing beyond his perfect control. And, when the last convulsion of the material frame shall be effected—and worlds, it may be—hurled to ruin—when the great day of his manifested wrath has come—the infinite tranquillity of his mind will be unbroken in the least degree.

These observations may find an illustration from the sublime scenes witnessed by a celebrated modern traveller. Having ascended to the summit of one of the highest continental mountains—he suddenly saw—on looking down—the clouds gathering rapidly around its magnificent centre. Presently he heard the thunder rolling far beneath his feet—saw the lightning flash, and the fury of the storm raging in the valley. But, standing as he did on a lofty peak—he looked up—and lo! a bright—clear blue sky—far above the storm below—all calm and serene! So with regard to God; His holy soul is full of love and peace—even while the just sentences of his righteous government are being dreadfully executed on a rebellious world. He is the God of consolation; and *judgment is His “strange work”*—unutterably foreign to His heart’s desire.

40 PATERNAL LOVE AND JUDICIAL WRATH.

How infinitely opposed, therefore, to truth, are the views of those who regard him as "hard and austere"—as possessed of vindictive feelings—or, as if he had any delight in inflicting suffering! It will then, be manifest, that judicial wrath may be "on" the sinner—or suspended over him,—even while the compassionate love of God is intensely seeking to deliver—and save him. No one can deny that these aspects of God's mind are especially and successively discovered by every believer—in regard to himself—during the interval from his first awakening to his happy reconciliation to God. And, if this combination of paternal love and judicial wrath actually existed in reference to those who are saved, previous to their conversion—then we perceive how it may *exist for all*.

Look, for example, at Saul of Tarsus—on his way to Damascus. Was *he* not *then* a child of wrath? Was not the judicial wrath of God abiding *on him*? Was God not angry with *him* every day? Who can deny it? And yet, behold the same Lord waiting to disclose to this very man,—over whom the sword of his government was being continuously held—the treasures of his love;—love which

had been burning to him, beyond all doubt, from a past Eternity!

Hence, we conclude, from this great fact, as well as from the harmonious testimony of the entire Word of God—that no expression of the wrathful aspects of Law and Justice to sinners in this life, however dreadful some of these may be—in order to awaken them from deadly sleep—and however fearfully they shall at length be verified in the endless perdition of the unbeliever, who continues to reject the plan of salvation—in any degree militates against the wondrous tidings of God's compassionate love to them all—and his infinite desire that all should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Peter iii. 9.)

But this blissful argument will be exceedingly strengthened—if we consider the true nature of God's revealed compassionate love to man. Too many who read of the Divine love to sinners altogether misunderstand it—by confounding it with the complacent love of man to his friend or fellow man. But the love of God to the world is as far removed above this love of man to man, both in nature and degree, as Heaven is high above the earth.

Now, apart from the natural affection between parents and children, let it be demonstrated—when is it that any man, dog, or other creature of God—*loves himself*? Never, till he first discerns in that object some excellence or quality—real or imaginary—which he regards as worthy—as deserving of his love: or till he first perceives in that individual the dawning of love to himself. But surely this is no representation of the nature of God's love to sinners! For, where does the man exist—whose natural character deserves any other than the infinite abhorrence of the Divine mind? If such, then, were the nature of God's love,—that he could not bestow it on any one, till he first saw in him—some attracting excellence;—then it might be demonstrated, both from the Scripture account of man, and from mournful fact, that God loves no human being. For, apart from the free bestowment of the grace of God—(which is doubtless the expression of Sovereign love)—no creature has been found, since the fall of man, possessing one element of vital holiness. But, not only is every man naturally destitute of attracting excellence—he is, also described in Scripture, as being at enmity

with God. For, "the carnal mind is enmity against God." How, then, could this enmity awaken or draw forth God's boundless love?

There is, thus, a wide chasm between the nature of the love of God to us—and that existing in all earthly friendships,—that is—where the affection is drawn forth by some previous attraction in its object. Hence the glowing language of the Apostle, "Herein is love," [compared with which no other love is entitled to the name] "not that we loved God," [for we were his enemies] 'but that God loved us' [even in that dreadful state] "and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And hence, again, his emphatic expression "behold what *manner* of love—the Father hath bestowed upon us—that *we*" [the natural heirs of wrath—formerly children of the devil] "should be called the sons of God."

In this fervent burst of grateful emotion, we are taught to distinguish between the love of God, and all other love. This is specifically pointed out by the expression "*manner* of love"—denoting a rich peculiarity—not merely of degree, but of *kind*. For, it manifestly, though indirectly, draws a line between the unmerited love of God—and that kind of

which is drawn forth amongst men by the previous perception of intrinsic excellence or affection.

But again, before God fixed His amazing love on the world—a world consisting of "sinners"—"enemies"—"ungodly"—or, before He manifested that love to them in the gift of His Son—did His omniscience first perceive in the distant future some spiritual change in any of them for the better, not previously produced by His free grace? Did it deserve some degree of meritorious excellence, however limited, to attract that love, or draw it forth? No—far from it. His love was truly SOVEREIGN. It was not attracted either by present goodness, or anticipated future merit. Its source was the infinite depths of His own gracious disposition. And yet how many are there, who refuse to believe in the compassionate love of God to themselves, because they have not yet seen enough in their hearts or minds *to deserve it!* They dream that when they become first conscious of some degree of goodness implanted in their hearts—they can then be persuaded of the love of God to themselves! Mournful delusion!

Now, on the contrary, we are most dis-

tinently taught, from *beginning* to end of *Scripture*, that Jehovah—having essentially the disposition to love and to communicate happiness—determined from eternity—of his own Sovereign will—to reveal to the human race—through the gift of his beloved Son—the greatness of his love—to manifest its height and depth—length and breadth to them,—and that, not only without the perception of any good thing in any one of them to enkindle it—but, as we have seen—in the very face of every thing adapted to quench it for ever. For, apart from the first free manifestation of that love personally to any sinner—what could exist in them previously, but increasing wickedness and depravity? Every man by nature, is, in the sight of God, A DEPRAVED BEING;—and, though it is true that some have sunk deeper in the mire of corruption than others—yet in regard to *positive* native goodness,—every man is *alike destitute of it*;—being continually regulated—(whether in a gross or more refined manner)—by a heart “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

There is one passage of Scripture (amongst many others which might be cited on this

subject)—which especially declares this wondrous aspect of the love of God. It is in the epistle of Paul to the Romans, (Chap. v. 8)—“God commendeth his love towards us”—that is, (as the expression *συμμετοίαν* signifies)—recommends—extols—holds it forth to admiration—like one who earnestly recommends some person or property—which he desires should be duly appreciated or purchased by another. But, on what special account does God extol, or thus recommend the *peculiar* excellence of *His* love above all other love? In *this*—that while we were *yet* sinners, [*yet* ungodly, *yet* enemies,] Christ died for us. The expression “*YET*,” is exceedingly remarkable. It denotes that in no respect,—past,—present,—or future, was God’s compassionate love called forth to any sinner,—by first perceiving any, the least, meritorious goodness in him; but that, in the full view of our unworthiness and wickedness—he so loved us, as to give his Son to die for us.

Thus, it was at Calvary,—at the foot of the Cross on which his beloved Son was expiring in agony for our sins—that the Lord—so to speak, took his stand while expounding the nature and extent—the glory—the unchangeableness

of his love to the world—in harmony with truth and righteousness. Inviting the whole world to draw near, and pointing to the crucified Lamb—he exclaimed—“For whom have I thus given up my Son to shame—to torture—and to die an ignominious death? For my erring—though devoted servants?—My friends?—My returning subjects? No. But for the altogether ‘ungodly’—the altogether ‘sinners’—for My murderous ‘enemies!’”

Hence, we perceive that the revealed love of God to man in the Gospel is not to be confounded, as it too frequently is—with approbation or *complacency*. For God has not—cannot possibly have any complacency to sinners in their unreconciled—unpardoned state. For, though his compassion to every member of the human race is unspeakably great—though he has made, through the death of his Son, a grand provision for their honourable deliverance; and has repeatedly and most emphatically declared—that he has no pleasure in their death, but rather that they should turn and live—yet, nevertheless, in the midst of all this unutterable pity—their characters are held in greatest abhorrence. He is “angry with the wicked—(that is, with those who de-

terminedly go on in their wickedness)—every day.” And if they yield not to the gracious manifestations of his love in the gospel—if they in consequence return not to him in this the season of their merciful visitation—What remains? Will his love save them? No verily. His Holiness—Justice and Truth—his character on the one hand, and the safety of the universe on the other—demand, that they shall be left to perish as monumental warnings to others;—even like those over whom the Redeemer wept and bewailed on Mount Olivet!

Far otherwise, however, is it in regard to those—who, having been arrested by his grace, and become through faith in the blood of atonement *united to his Son*—are therefore emphatically termed HIS PEOPLE. *For them*—viewed in that august relation,—as actual recipients of his Holy Spirit—and as in some degree conformed to the moral image of the Redeemer—HE HAS THE MOST COMPLACENT DELIGHT. Who can describe it? He rejoices over them—while he rests in his love. They are now (since their return to the Lord)—virtually “one” with his Son—being “married” to Him—(Romans vii. 4.)—“members

of His body"—(Eph. v. 30.)—sharers in His infinite privileges and glorious prospects. (1 John i. 3.) They reflect in one degree or other, even here—His spiritual glory—and ere long shall be presented without spot or blemish before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

But, while the return of sinners to God thus discloses the full fountain of His love—it is, nevertheless, not a *new* affection—strictly speaking—which He thus exhibits—but rather a new manifestation or different aspect of the same eternal love which He revealed to the *whole human family*, when He gave His Son to be a sacrifice for their guilt.

Thus, the distinction between the feelings manifested by God to men when they are *far* from Him—living in rebellion, and those again which He reveals when they become actually *reconciled* to him—may be faintly illustrated by the successive feelings of a father over the fluctuating history—dark or bright—of a beloved son. Behold the parent, at one time weeping in secret over his lost son, when confirmatory accounts had newly arrived of his darkening wayward career ;—and then, at

another time, regard his overflowing joy and serene delight—when seated with his restored child in harmony and peace,—What do we perceive in these chequered feelings—but different manifestations of *the same deep-rooted affections* ? In the former case, the love was shown by pungent grief—and parental solicitude,—in the latter—by complacent satisfaction. But what then,—these were but different fruits or aspects of *the same love*.

Had Absalom, the son of David, disbanded his rebellious army, and returned to the king with deepest *contrition*, and sued for pardon—this return, if known to be sincere, would *not have created love* in the heart of David ;—for that existed there already in all its force. But it would have changed the compassionate—heart-broken emotions, into complacent delight—and thus produced a *new* manifestation of his love. Instead of the heart-rending grief—which he afterwards manifested, when the parricide fell in the field of battle,—he would—when convinced of his repentance, have embraced him with transports of joy.

Oh ! the love of God to the human race is but distantly illustrated by such cases—or even by that inimitable parable, drawn by the

hand of Jesus *expressly to set it forth*. There, the love of the injured father is described as having been burning to his son—even while in the far country he was spending his substance in riotous living, and preferring rather to starve on the husks of swine, than return to his father's house. And, when at length he came to himself—Did he require to move his father's heart to compassion?—to *kindle* up again love in *his* bosom?—to restore the property he had taken away—and thus dispose that injured parent to receive the wanderer again? Quite the reverse. The father saw his son afar off; and ran, and had compassion, and kissed him—even before the unhappy prodigal had time to urge a single plea.

And does not this lovely scene graphically represent the heart—the true aspect of God *to every man—woman and child*—to every “prodigal” of the human family—though still living in the far country of sin and unbelief? Was it not originally depicted by the Redeemer *for this very design*? Who can disprove it from Scripture? Who will attempt it—but those who are in some degree the representatives of that ignoble class—who murmured at the enlarged benevolence of Jesus,—saying, “This

man receiveth sinners and eateth with them"? Is it not then a most ruinous contradiction of the word of God—involving the blood of many souls—practically to deny or hide in public teaching, this most attractive portraiture of the heart and mind of God in relation to every perishing sinner? But how often is this done? how often is God set forth, directly or indirectly, as one who is *in heart alienated* from man, (personally considered,) on account of his transgressions;—as one who can alone have compassion awakened, so to speak, in his mind—by the penitential tears—reformation—earnest appeals—and mental agonies of the sinner—as if He were "*hard and austere*"—or as if He were like selfish men (in regard to those in whom they have no interest—and for whom they have no affection)—requiring to be won over—or affected by mere passionate appeals to sentimental emotion? The results are awfully disastrous. God is dishonoured—and the hearers are in imminent danger of being eternally ruined. For, such representations tend to deepen the darkness which already covers the sinner's understanding regarding God; while, so far from being adapted to inspire confidence in his forgiving

mercy, they rather lead the unhappy souls to flee farther and farther from God—yea to banish Him from their thoughts, except when otherwise *compelled* by intense distress and alarm !

Far, unspeakably far, is it from the writer's desire to deprecate penitential tears—great alarm—or earnest and immediate reformation on the part of sinners, abstractly considered, while seeking the knowledge of salvation. But, it is one thing to view these mental exercises as being frequently important means to lead newly awakened sinners straight up to behold the Lamb of God, bearing the burden of their iniquities—that they might believe and be saved ;—and quite another, (as previously shown) to set forth God as requiring such efforts to melt his heart to compassion and forgiving mercy !

What, then, shall be said of those who give large prominence to other doctrines of Scripture in their public teaching—but, who give no frequent—emphatic utterance of the wondrous revelation of GOD'S LOVE TO THE WORLD ? For, if the doctrine of this boundless compassionate love to every man be distinctly revealed in Scripture, as it undoubtedly

is—if it shines forth there, in relation to other revealed doctrines, as the sun and centre of them all—and, if it be essentially necessary to the rapid progress of the Redeemer's kingdom—to the turning of “many to righteousness,”—that the minds of men in general should be earnestly and most emphatically directed—(along with a due proportion of other truths) to this all-affecting—heart-conquering aspect of God, in relation to themselves;—How—we ask, can he be said to understand and experimentally know God—or be eminently successful in winning souls to the Redeemer—who seldom dwells upon the glorious topic—who only occasionally refers to it? He may, indeed, assign it a place in his professed creed—and thus *abstractly* hold the doctrine tenaciously—yet, if it has never stood forth to his own spiritual perception in graphic relief—never been realized in its power, as the source of unbounded peace and spiritual confidence to himself—or, if it thus be only occasionally and almost incidentally alluded to in its ordinary teaching—what can be concluded,—but that he is yet himself mournfully deficient in the knowledge of its glorious meaning—its infinite importance? Who can wonder that such a

vital deficiency should, to a great extent, arrest both the spiritual growth of believers under his charge—and the conversion of sinners to God?

But again—since every thing depends on the experimental knowledge of the love of God to ourselves—since it may be proved to a demonstration, that it is only by the belief of sovereign love as revealed on the cross of Christ, that any soul can be saved,—since it is manifest that the whole of man's continued sinfulness and misery may be traced to one root, and that—*enmity to God*—How vain to dream of a truly successful ministry where these essential truths are but seldom enforced! For what can remove or slay that enmity—which exists in all its power (however concealed from sight) in every one who has never received eternal life—never been regenerated by the Spirit of God? What can remove that fearful barrier—so as to inspire the soul with confidence to draw near to God—exclaiming, “Abba Father”? Will fear of wrath—hopes of Heaven—or the mere offer of any personal advantage do it? No. In the very nature of things—according to the mental constitution which God has given to man—it is impossible

that these could remove enmity, or inspire the soul with confidence and devoted love to God, as an all-satisfying friend.

Now, while it is never to be forgotten that it is by the blessing of the Holy Spirit on the proclamation of Gospel truth—that any soul is awakened, and led to the knowledge of salvation—yet, nevertheless—there is a *beauteous adaptation* in the glorious remedy which God has provided—to restore that soul. If a sick man, for example, is restored to health under the skilful treatment of a physician—we say—and say truly—that God has raised him up. For, whatever may have been the skill of the physician—or the intrinsic value of the means employed to effect the cure—the blessing of God was indispensable to the happy result.

Thus, though admitting the necessity of that Divine blessing in all its extent—and fully allowing, that, without it, all the means employed would have been in vain; it is still universally acknowledged, in such cases—that there was an intrinsic fitness in the means or medicines, to effect the cure.

Now, the same principle holds true in relation to the restoration of the soul. Besides the superadded blessing of the Holy Spirit—there

is a moral fitness—an intrinsic adaptation in the truth which God employs to overcome man's enmity to Himself. For, were it otherwise, that blissful result would never, in any case, be effected—without miraculously superseding the laws of the human constitution. But, while the entire Scriptures of truth agree in declaring that it is not by might—nor power—but by the Spirit of God—that the wondrous change in man at conversion is produced ;—they no less fully maintain the moral power—fitness or adaptation of the means—ordained by God to touch the springs of the human mind. Hence, the beauteous contrast, so graphically depicted by the Psalmist, in the nineteenth Psalm,—between the respective adaptations of natural science, on the one hand, and the glorious Gospel, on the other. After presenting to our view, the Heavens and all their magnificence, and awakening attention to their strains of lofty eloquence—universally declaring the glory of God—he abruptly turns away from them all, to extol the superiority of THE GOSPEL—exclaiming, “the law of the Lord is PERFECT [*in its adaptations to man, as a fallen being—as a condemned—alienated sinner*] CONVERTING THE SOUL.” In other

words—as if it were written—great—and glorious as are the works of God—they *cannot* restore—they have no fitness to restore the wanderer man. But “The law of the Lord [embodying the Gospel of his love to the world] is PERFECT”—perfectly fitted (instrumentally) to arrest his progress...and bring him back to the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul. Hence, responded another inspired man of God in after ages—“I am not ashamed of the GOSPEL OF CHRIST—for IT is the POWER OF GOD to salvation to every one who believeth.

Wherein, then, does this blissful adaptation exist? or, in other words, What is intrinsically fitted to overcome the deadly enmity of unregenerate man to God? Would terrific denunciations—or mere prospects of personal advantage be found so adapted? No, verily. A sinner, we repeat, cannot be reconciled by terror—or hopes of safety in Heaven—though these motives are undoubtedly necessary to awaken, or quicken, his attention to the grand appointed remedy. For, though Heaven were disclosed to him in all its glory—though he were miraculously caught up to its threshold, and promised one of its richest mansions—if he would renounce his enmity,—it would

still remain in the depths of his heart—*unslain*. And, anon, were he taken to the very gates of hell, and threatened with the fiery gulph—if his affections were not given up to God—even this fearful appeal would also prove ineffectual. And, why? Because there is no adaptation, either in the one or the other, to overcome his enmity—to reconcile him to his God. What, then, can do it, under the Spirit of God—but the distinct perception OF THE LOVE OF GOD TO HIS SOUL—ATTES-
TED BY THE ATONING SUFFERINGS OF THE
REDEEMER FOR HIS SINS?

He, then, who proclaims a Gospel which does not exhibit in its very front—*the compassionate love of God to every man*—be his character what it may—a love actually existing to him in his condemned state—while it weeps over his wretchedness—while it abhors his guilt—and warns him of the wrath to come; preaches another Gospel than that which the Redeemer presented to Nicodemus—and, at the same time, to every human being—preaches a Gospel which has no intrinsic fitness to lead the unhappy prodigals of this world to exclaim, “We will arise and go to our Father.”

True, indeed—as once and again repeated—**—alarming—sin-convincing truths must also** in their own place be boldly announced. But for what intent? Doubtless, under the blessing from on high—to awaken the soul of the sinner to his need of the glorious remedy; and to dispose him to come to THE CROSS, TO BEHOLD THE LOVE OF GOD written in letters of blood—that *he might be healed.*

Nor is the love of God to be contemplated by itself; but in immediate relation to all the attributes of the Divine character, as they are beautifully harmonized on the cross of the Redeemer. For, he who has the clearest perception of the Holiness of God,—of His infinite opposition to sin—of the awful demands of His Law and Justice on the transgressor, as manifested by the sufferings and death of Christ, will have the most sanctifying convictions of the nature and boundless extent of the love of God in providing such a sacrifice for his redemption. Thus, let it never be forgotten, that, whatever be the height and depth of that infinite love to man—it can only be manifested to *any* soul by such means as at once illustrate his Holiness—Justice—Truth—as are *intrinsically fitted* to secure the everlasting loving

submission of the sinner to His Righteous Government. It is on this great principle that the love of God has made no provision for blessing any man—apart from the free exercise of his own responsibility—apart from his being brought to submit to the sceptre of the Lord Jesus.

The sinner may, indeed, say in heart, when the Gospel of the grace of God is pressed on his attention —“if God has such intrinsic compassion for me—if he has such a perfect willingness for my salvation—why then am I not saved? Why does He not at once fill me with peace and joy?” But to such presumptuous reasonings—it is enough at present to reply, that the real root of this inward scepticism, is the wilful forgetfulness of man’s actual position as a responsible agent. — They are, moreover, a practical denial of the great fact, that he is in possession of a clear revelation describing the way (perfectly accessible and near at hand) which God has opened for all—and, on which he has emphatically promised to meet and bless every sinner. How, then, can he expect God to bless him—while he is in the very attitude of rebellion,—practically disdaining the only way opened by God for his salvation at so awful an expense!

But to return,—let it be again urgently demanded, Why are the doctrines of the love God, and the gift and death of his Son, so seldom proclaimed in all their fulness — so seldom resorted to by awakened souls? Why are they so frequently dimmed, if not practically beclouded altogether by many preachers, in their statements of gospel truth? Surely one great reason of this slowness to understand, and fully to respond to the revealed love and promises of God—is, our continual tendency to estimate His infinitely capacious heart and mind, by those of selfish — contracted—fallen man. It is, therefore, part of the work of the Holy Spirit—not merely to teach us at first, but continually to remind us—that God's ways are not as our ways—nor his thoughts as our thoughts;—that, both in their nature and extent—they are as far removed above ours—as Heaven is above the Earth. We, indeed, find it difficult, nay, impossible, for our narrow—naturally selfish spirit—to comprehend, till our perceptions are enlarged by a Divine power—that the Heart of God—embraces in its infinite capacity, an ocean of love and kindness, commensurate with the universe at large;—and that.

since the fearful barrier of Law and Justice between Heaven and earth has been removed by the atonement of the Redeemer — this Eternal Ocean is ever rolling its waves on the shores of this world. Hence, we go on to systematize the Divine love, and to contract it within limits—not the measure of God—but of man ;—and are apt, like the ancient Pharisees, to grudge, or be surprised, if the tide of God's kindness sweep over *our landmarks* ;—rushing onward over the world to embrace freely multitudes of depraved—wretched and miserable prodigals — whom, otherwise, we would have considered unfit to be recipients of such goodness !

Now, of all the evils which have ever been done to true religion by many of its real or professed friends — of all the wounds which Christ ever received in the house of his friends —that of *unscripturally limiting, or obscuring the love of God*—and the simplicity and freeness of the Gospel—that of narrowing the river of life—and *exacting a previous test of some godly feeling*—or meritorious qualification—ere its healing waters could be approached—ere the soul could be forgiven,—have been the *deepest—the greatest*. For, by these unhal-

lowed means—thousand and tens of thousands have been shut out from the only element which can bless a perishing soul—even the certain knowledge of the compassionate kindness of God to them—manifested by the gift and sufferings of the Redeemer. Thus are they led to disbelieve his infinite readiness to receive any or all sinners to the overflowing fountain of salvation—“without money and without price,”—that is—without the least degree of qualifying goodness.

Now, there is nothing more calculated to neutralize such attempts to circumscribe the unbounded love of God to the family of man, than to read with unbiassed mind the discourses of our Saviour when addressing unrenewed sinners—even such as were emphatically condemned by man on account of their habitual career. And there we perceive him, so far from guarding the absolute declarations of the love of God, and gift of his Son to them—so far from telling them that it was quite an uncertain thing whether salvation was provided for them, till they first realized some remarkable change in their own character ;—we, *on the contrary*, find him in the most unequivocal manner inviting them—even all wretched as

they were,—to drink freely of the living stream of eternal life. Thus, in the last day of one of the Jewish feasts, “Jesus stood and cried, saying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.’” And, who present in that vast assembly appeared to be more deeply impressed with this gracious invitation—(*doubtless also intended for them,*) than the very officers who came purposely to arrest the Lamb of God? For, when they returned to their homes, they boldly exclaimed, “Never man spake like this man!” Thus, again, we find the Saviour not merely pointing out in general to his hearers that there was a sufficiency in Him, for them all; but urging on their minds, the glorious liberating truth—that that sufficiency of blessings had been *expressly provided for them*; and, therefore, doubtless, for all. “My Father giveth you,” (addressing the multitude of unrenowned persons around him—many of whom were his open foes,) “the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from Heaven, and GIVETH LIFE UNTO THE WORLD.” (John vi. 32, 33.)

Now, for the very design, manifestly, of establishing beyond a doubt, the perfect free-

ness of His grace, the Spirit of Christ,—some thirty years after he departed to glory, placed on imperishable record, a grand selection from amongst the multitude of conversions which took place during his personal ministry, and that of his inspired servants. And, of what description were the objects thus singled out to be the practical expounders of the Gospel for all future ages? Not those, indeed, which human wisdom would have registered, as being most adapted to secure the honour and holy design of the Gospel; but, on the contrary, chiefly those which it would have considered the most *unfit* to be the recipients of his grace—having, up to the time of their speedy conversion to God—not the slightest degree of preparatory holiness, or moral qualification;—while some of them (as Zaccheus the publican—the dying malefactor—the woman of Samaria—the Philippian jailor,) were actually, up to an hour or two of their blissful reconciliation to God, sunk in the deepest degradations; and residing, so to speak, in the extreme boundary of the kingdom of darkness.

But, let us especially instance the *illustrious case of Saul of Tarsus*, set forth in *scripture*, not only to demonstrate the won-

drous fact that God freely receives sinners, however previously far from him, to the eternal banquet of his love—but also, to exhibit the very elements of truth, which he would have his servants continually to present for the salvation of the world.

Here, we behold the Lord going into the army of Satan, and taking out one of his principal servants, and revealing to him the treasures of his love and grace. Now, one grand design of this great event was to explain to all, by a practical example, how the very chief of sinners,—however black with sin—however deep in the pit of corruption—however stout-hearted and far from God—might be brought at once, (when truly awakened from their sleep of death,) to the richest possible enjoyment of the love of God.

Travelling to Damascus under the dominion of sin and Satan, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the children of God, he was suddenly arrested by a power perfectly sufficient to crush him, and charged by the Almighty one who arrested him with the bitterest—most murderous enmity. “Saul—Saul, why persecutest thou me?” How fearful such an apprehension! Startled, as from

sleep, he looked up, doubtless expecting to see a sword of vengeance unsheathed! For, he must have felt that he was in the full power of the GREAT ONE, whose people he had hitherto persecuted.

But did he see a sword? Did he behold the countenance of an angry Judge? No.—To his astonishment he saw, at one view, a Being of perfect power, and yet wondrous love, standing between him and the gulf of eternal destruction, as one would rush between a man and death, who was about to commit suicide, —and pleading with him in tenderest accents, Why will ye die? It is hard for thee to fight against God—to rush on eternal misery! At once he saw that nothing but LOVE kept back the thunderbolt, (a word, and he was crushed!) that nothing but LOVE could plead with a rebellious worm, which he could destroy in a moment!

He quickly exclaimed, “Who art thou Lord?” What then was the reply? Was it “I am the avenger of my slaughtered children;” or, “I am the angry God.” No; but, “I am Jesus [the Saviour] whom thou persecutest,” [come to save you] I am come forth (*as if he had added*) not to compel you to give

over—not to bind you with a chain—but to VANQUISH YOU BY MY LOVE. In a moment, the former history of Jesus, the crucified one, came to his mind. And, when he saw His bright glory—His power—His attitude between him and destruction—and heard His heart-affecting expostulation, the glorious gospel burst upon his view! He was thus convinced, he was won by love, and exclaimed—“LORD, WHAT wilt thou have me to do?” Now, apart from the miraculous manifestation to his bodily senses, (which was necessary to constitute him an apostle of Christ,) Was not his conversion designed to be a pattern, or specimen, of God’s manner of converting sinners to the end of time—even by the disclosure to the soul, of unbounded sovereign love, through THE GIFT OF ONE MIGHTY TO SAVE? (1 Tim. i. 16.)

In this point of view, how refreshing is his glorious argument to the Corinthian church, while accounting to them for the exceeding ardour of his love—and expounding the grand secret of his holiness—his power—his usefulness. “If we be beside ourselves—it is to God. For the love of Christ constraineth us.” Here he manifestly anticipates the ques-

tion,—“How did you come to know and feel the love of Christ so marvellously beyond many others? Was it not by the disclosure at first of a special love to yourself, above and beyond that which is revealed to all?” “No, verily (as if he had replied) I discovered, and still perceive, His love to myself, *by seeing it embodied in an event equally true for every other one.* I no more believe that Christ loved me, to the exclusion of others, than I believe that the sun shines for me, and not also for the whole world. I see it—‘because I thus judge (or reason) that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him who died for them, and rose again.’”

Let no one think, therefore, that because Saul saw and felt the love of God so comparatively bright, to himself, that, therefore, there was more revealed for him than for others. Oh, no. As well might a man whose eyes were only half open say to a man who enjoyed the full use of his sight,—“O, the sun shines with a brighter blaze to you than to me.” “No, indeed, (*exclaims the other*) the reason why I *enjoy the light of the sun more than you,* is

because *I perceive it more clearly*. Go—get your eyes fully opened, and you will also enjoy the rich effulgence of his beams.”

So exclaimed the same illustrious apostle to the Ephesian Church,—“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—that ye may be *able to comprehend*, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and *to know* the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

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